

## TELEPACÍFICO LABELS PROJECT: ¿TRANSMEDIA OR NON-TRANSMEDIA?

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**ABSTRACT:** This text aims to label LABELS as transmedia (or not), the first project of the Regional Channel called Telepacífico, with an LGBTI theme self-designated as Transmedia. To do this, we will return to some approaches and principles around this adjective (or noun); and we will contrast them with the Labels proposal, in order not only to determine whether or not it is transmedia, but also to generate constructive contributions for future projects of this nature.

**KEYWORDS:** Media, digital narratives, social networks, inclusive projects, transmedia storytelling.

### 11 TRANSMEDIA COMES OUT THE CLOSET (INTRODUCTION)

Since the beginning of this century, we have gone from having a few mass media (radio, press and television), to having a whole technological network of content, universes, niches, products and by-products, which were initially called New Media, interactive

media, digital communication, cyber media, metamediums, cyber communication or e-communication. Although these products, generated from a new medium called cyberspace or the Internet, founded their genesis on traditional forms of production; finally (and based on its own particularity and the almost leading role of the audience), it was necessary to transcend and expand its content proposals, both in terms of its conception, as well as in its forms of distribution and even consumption. In this regard, Denis Renó states that: “We can consider mobility, interactivity, participation and the construction of spaces, channels and media content as some of the changes. These changes cannot be interpreted by the traditional theories of communication, since when these were created, there were no such changes” (Renó, 2019).

From the historical perspective, at the end of the 19th century the audiovisual medium has evolved from the appearance of cinema in 1895 to television in 1926, to video in 1980, to multimedia and hypermedia in 1990 and from these to transmedia narratives. Now, although the term began to work from 1975 with Stuart Saunders when he spoke about Transmedia Music (Renó & Flores, Transmedia Journalism, 2012), and it was retaken in 1991 with Marsha Kinder under a theory called Transmedia Intertextuality (Kindergarten, 1991), was in 2001 when Henry Jenkins laid the foundations for

what we now know as Transmedia narratives: “Media convergence also fosters transmedia storytelling, the development of content through multiple channels. As producers exploit organic convergence more, storytellers will use each channel to communicate different types and levels of narrative information and will use each medium to do what it does best”(Jenkins, 2001).

Now, although there are so many definitions or thoughts about transmedia, if I had to decide on one, I would stick with the definition that Scolari offered in an interview for a blog about news and clues from the University’s Master of Journalism innovation Miguel Hernández: “After many years of discussions and debates it seems that everyone has finally agreed. The most consensual definition refers to two key components: the story is told in many media and platforms and users participate in its expansion. On the other hand, in the professional field, many times reference is made exclusively to this first part, leaving aside the contributions of the audience”(Scolari, 2018).

This leads to addressing the issue of the importance of interactivity in Transmedia Narratives, which finally translates into the concept of prosumer, a term that was established in 1980 when Alvin Tofler used it to refer to content-producing citizens as consuming content. And in short, this interaction, this prosume, is a distinctive element of Transmedia Narratives. “, if there is no interactivity today, media processes will have their results limited to few users interested in monologue processes, where one has the power of speech and the others are only free to receive the message” (Renó, 2019).

Based on the above, it could be said that Transmedia is then a convergence of media, such as Multimedia, but in which the flow of content on multiple channels or platforms is inevitable, where the consumer is at the same time the producer of said contents (Jenkins, 2003). In other words, as Scolari (2014) affirms, it is “a type of story in which the story unfolds through multiple media and communication platforms and in which a part of consumers assumes an active role in this expansion process. “ In this same document, Scolari also presents these two formulas to better understand transmedia narratives and the decisive role of users (prosumers).

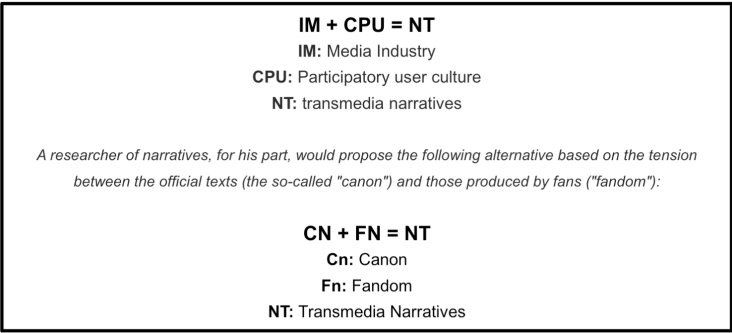


Figure 1. Transmedia formulas (Scolari, 2014).

In this order of ideas, it can be said that transmedia projects (Figure 2) are, ultimately, a different formal system that no longer works in the space and temporal logic of traditional media, where the parts are placed one behind the other in a linear relationship, either in space or in time. “This is a system where the parts are considered autonomous, but with the possibility of grouping together many times, in varied and automatic ways, in addition to being transcoded. Like a menu that goes to another and another and another.... which multiplies the forms of presentation, representation and expression on a large scale ”(Irigaray, 2014).

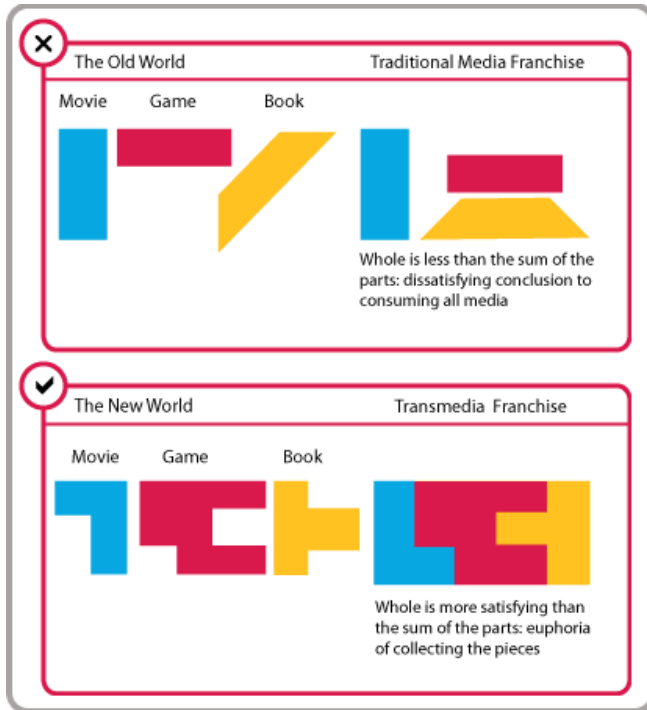


Figure 2. Transmedia concept (Pratten, 2011).

In summary, the journey has been from audiovisual to multimedia and currently to transmedia, understanding that in the audiovisual there is a passive consumer, in the multimedia there is an active consumer who interacts with the medium, but does not transform it, and in a transmedia narrative, there is an active consumer who interacts, intervenes and produces new content. According to Mittell (2006) we are in the presence of “complex narratives” that demand a high level of attention and interpretive complicity from audiences. “Several processes come together in the new communicative production cooperatives. On the one hand, the digital network allows the exchange of content between thousands of subjects, breaking with the “one-to-many” model that characterized Broadcasting, and on

the other, the standardization and cheaper technology has placed in the hands of millions of users have simple and easy-to-use instruments for textual creation and manipulation "(Scolari, 2008).

## 2 | LABELS CASE: #LABELSLIE

Labels calls it self the first transmedia series based on the experiences of the LGBTI community in Colombia. In the words of its director: "It is a real challenge to break historical patterns of how we consume television in our country, and even more so with a production that narrates the experiences of one of the communities that has suffered most from bullying and discrimination; we want to contribute from the media, from public television, to social inclusion and take into account daily references in our society to tell stories "(Telepacífico, 2018).

The project presents 5 chapters, where each one represents the relationship between two characters. Each chapter was released on Sundays at 9pm on the regional Telepacífico channel and later published on an exclusive website for the project (<http://telepacifico.com/labels/>). In addition to this, the project contemplated the creation of an Instagram account (<https://www.instagram.com/veronicablondi2018/>), for one of the characters that finally intersects in a special way in two chapters of the series.

Verónica Blondi, published different photos and screenshots throughout the week, which finally connected with the broadcast of the series' chapters that were broadcast on Sunday; Which, in turn, linked these digital contents with credits that denoted day and time, with which history suggested their digital expansion. In addition, the promotion of the project was transferred to the social networks of the regional channel on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, allowing a greater scope of interaction. Now, in order to establish whether or not the Labels project can be considered transmedia, what will be done is an analysis based on different characteristics that some theorists suggest that a Transmedia project should have. As a first step, we will subject Labels to the 7 principles proposed by Jenkins (2010) regarding transmedia:

- *Spreadability And Drillability:* With spreadability, Jenkins refers to the development and expansion of the narrative through viral practices in RRSS. In drillability, to the task carried out by fan communities in dissecting the original story, looking beyond the surface. In this Case, Labels has a spreadability dictated by the creation of @veronicablondi's Instagram. However, this narrative expansion is limited not only by the absence of more accounts of other characters in RRSS, but also by the limitation of the character's posts (19 publications in the month and a half of the project's broadcast).



Figure 3. @veronicablondie2018 Instagram Profile.

Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/veronicablondi2018/>

However, and thanks to the interview with Edwin Restrepo, director of the project, it was evident that being a series under the LGBTI theme, the greatest number of interactions occurred in the internal inbox of the Instagram platform. So, if the depth was worked, only, under the impossibility of making it more public, that is, of socializing it to all audiences.



Figure 4. Inbox Instagram Account @veronicablondie2018 (Labels Project, 2018).

On the other hand, depth was also compromised by not delving further into the narrative itself from the digital account. In this case, Verónica could have responded to the publications they sent her, and thus be able to co-construct the depth of the plot through the series' prosumers.

- *Continuity Vs. Multiplicity*: Jenkins mentions these two elements as the possibility that there is a continuity of the character in the various platforms (canon); and multiplicity such as the possibility of having alternative story versions on other platforms. In the case of Labels. Continuity is effectively achieved by being able to associate what happened in the chapters, with the real-time posts that Blondi posted on Instagram during the week. However, in terms of multiplicity, the project did not take it into account as it did not have the ability to expand the story of other characters on other platforms.

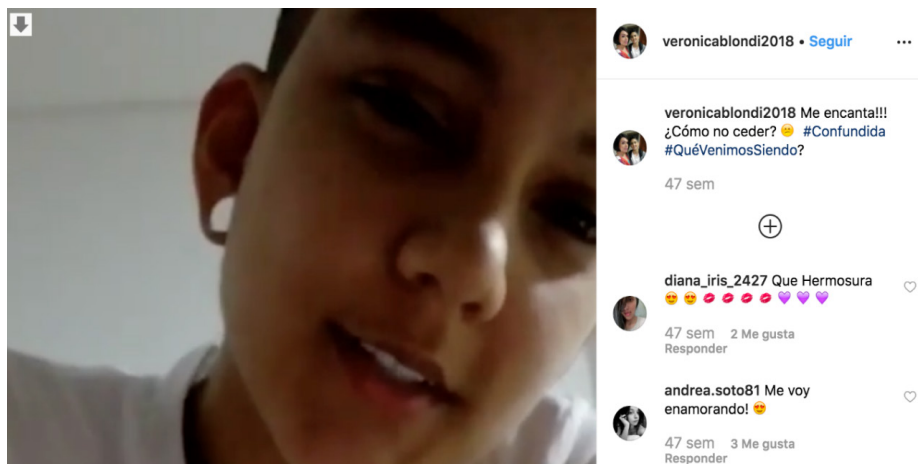


Figure 5. Posts and comments @veronicablondie2018 Instagram Profile.

Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/veronicablondi2018/>

- *Immersion and Extractability*: Immersion for Jenkins, is the way the prosumer can get involved with the narrative. And extractability is the possibility of extracting elements from the story and bringing them to real life. Like any project called Transmedia, Labels has a degree of immersion that allows the audience to immerse themselves in the story (See comments Figure 5). However, on the subject of extractability, the limited scope of the series did not lead to generating an extraction of history into the real world.
- *Worldbuilding*: When designing a transmedia project, the authors must be extremely faithful to the world created for it. In the case of Labels, this world presents itself as an urban history that occurs in certain spaces. However, going deeper

into this world, it can be extracted that the universe proposed in the project reflects a city of “underground culture” that is probably typical of a community that is not openly accepted in society. In this case, the night, the night spots and other settings reflect a world that, as Jenkins says, must be respected.

- *Seriality*: seriality is a term that comes from television production and in the case of Labels, being a product, whose main platform is Television, the concept of seriality exists.
- *Subjectivity*: Jenkins affirms that transmedia Subjectivity refers to the public's interest in exploring the history of those secondary characters from the point of view of these characters. When looking at Labels, one could affirm that there could be a number of secondary characters that could be of interest to the audience, but that they had to be explored.
- *Performance*: Jenkins argues that transmedia stories should invite the participation of prosumers who are willing to creatively engage in making new texts to add them to the original universe, characterizing this new narrative for the user's active role in expanding the original story. “ In the case of Labels, I feel like there was a lack of a more direct invitation for prosumers to contribute to the story.

After this contrast between Jenkins' approaches to transmedia, we will now address the elements mentioned by Gómez (2011) and their applicability with the Labels project:

- *The content is created by one or very few visionaries*: In this case, the Labels Project had its beginning in the head of its later director Edwin Restrepo, who jumped from a Television project, to think about this idea of expanding it from a transmedia conception, in which he then ended up assuming other “Visionaries”.
- *Transmedia must be foreseen at the beginning of the franchise*: Although Gómez mentions cases such as Star Wars or the Lord of the Rings in which transmedia was not initially thought of, but was taken by the viewer, in the case From Labels, the project was thought of as Transmedia from the beginning.
- *The content is distributed on three or more platforms*: Given this statement, one could say that Labels has as platforms: The television broadcast, Veronica's Instagram and the web portal where the episodes are. What happens is that the portal finally offers a retransmission of the television episodes, so finally it does not suggest new content.
- *The content is unique*: Labels complies with this characteristic. It is the first program proposed as Transmedia, on Colombian regional television under the LGBTI theme.
- *The content is based on a unique vision of the narrative world*: The Labels universe is coherent within its narrative.

- *Concerted effort to avoid fractures and divisions in the narrative world:* At this point, and having little knowledge of the transmedia project as such and an absence of feedback from the character of Veronica, in my opinion, the fracture takes place at the moment that the Prosumers are drawn from the proposed transmedia universe to discuss the project as such (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Posts and comments @veronicablondie2018 Instagram Profile.

Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/veronicablondi2018/>

However, this break, escapes when analyzing the interactions of some prosumers through Veronicablondi2018's Instagram inbox, in which, if the narrative line of the story is maintained and therefore of the character.



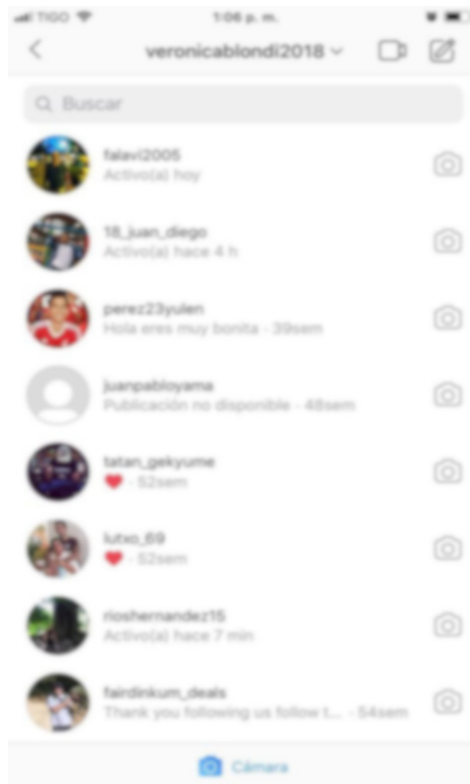


Figure 7. Screenshot Instagram Inbox @veronicablondie2018 Instagram Profile. (Labels Project, 2018)

- *Vertical integration of all the actors:* In this case, in which Gómez refers to the actors behind the project, being a product from Public Television, the control of budgets is quite rigorous. And it was this element that prevented a better expansion of the story, since not having enough resources, it is difficult to have production and follow-up for multiple platforms, characters, messages and content. In that order of ideas, the financing played against Labels.
- *Participation of the audiences:* The audiences had space to participate through the profile of Verónica Blondi. The difficulty was in the interactivity of the project with its prosumers, not only because of the scope (having for example more Instagram profiles of the characters), but also because having this theme, much of the interaction occurred in the inbox and not in the comments. (Figure 7).



Figure 6. Posts and comments @veronicablondie2018 Instagram Profile.

Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/veronicablondi2018/>

Finally, we will return to the factors exposed by Vicente Gosciola (2011), who presents 6 characteristics of a transmedia project (cited by Luciana Renó - 2011):

- *It is a narrative structure format,*
- *It is a great story shared in fragments, which are distributed across multiple platforms*
- *Allow the story to be expanded*
- *Circulate on social networks*
- *Support this distribution in the strategy called “Viral”*
- *Adopt mobile devices as a production tool.*

In this sense, Labels proposes a narrative structure format, a fragmentation of the story distributed on 2 platforms: Television and Instagram with the profile of @veronicablondi (I do not count the portal, since it is the retransmission of television episodes). In turn, Labels allows the possibility of expanding the story, without this having happened. Also, the social network of Instagram was used, which allowed the possibility of using mobile devices, but which had as a limitation not being able to make that feedback between the narrative and the prosumers.

In short and depending on the eye with which you look at it and using the famous analogy of the glass, you can think about whether the matter is half full or half empty. Labels

is a project posed per se, as a transmedia project that based this self-designation on the construction of an Instagram account of one of the characters, in which different actions and situations were chronologically posted that later enriched the chapters of the series (especially the 2 referring to Verónica and Alejo).

In this bet there was a timid participation of the public (But there was), the project was also promoted on multiple digital channels of the Telepacífico channel and a portal was developed that brought together the chapters of the series, once the chapter was released on television. In other words, in the best style of the LGBTI world in which labels often fall short, Labels seems to have a foot here and a foot there. So, let's go to the conclusions...

### **31 “SO MUCH SHOW, SO MUCH DRAMA, SO MUCH ROMANCE...” (CONCLUSIONS)**

As the Labels project puts it well, definitions or labels both in the LGBTI community and in the academic world often fall short between nuances and points of view. The same happens with Transmedia, there are clear elements and very well-defined notions, but that, in practice, or in reality, the clarity that was previously not exposed.

And it is that many times and as a result of the nuances, rules or even diversity of opinions, it is finally difficult to put a transmedia label on certain projects. There is no golden rule to say, for example, how many digital media must exist, or how many posts must be, or even how expanded that narrative universe must be to consider Transmedia. I think that maybe the issue happens because to explain transmedia we have mega-successful, blockbuster projects with high budgets that finally become our role models. And so, to that extent, certain projects, with their initial difficulties, end up succumbing to the great expectation generated by the adjective, or noun, or language of transmedia.

In Labels a phenomenon like this occurs: It is a television project designed as a transmedia in which there was a digital platform to expand the narrative. And although some authors suggest a certain number of platforms (Gómez, 2011); Others affirm that the number is not important, but the quality and use of these. “I also do not agree with the Producers Guild of America, who believe that a transmedia project must involve at least three media or platforms. It is arbitrary. I believe that if we add a film and a website in an enriching way, we can achieve a complete and representative transmedia experience” (Jenkins, in an interview with Scolari. (2013).

Furthermore, if we take literal definitions of transmedia, Labels could be classified as such: “Transmedia is a contemporary language that offers the user a possibility of physical and / or virtual navigation, feedback, reconstruction, participation through different, complementary content and related to each other” (Renó, 2019). What happens is that, if we analyze point by point what a statement of these suggests, Labels could fall short. In other words, the topic could be more in the scope of a transmedia project, than in the characteristics it should have.

Scolari (2017) at some point asks these questions: “Why are many projects called “transmedia” when they only focus on narrative expansion and ignore users / fans? Is it enough to put the adjective “transmedia” in a communication project to generate a refreshing coolness effect before selling it to customers? In this sense, Labels might have to argue certain things, but finally I would recognize it from the outset as a transmedia project, although with the limitation that had in the interactivity with the prosumer, in terms of the expansion in more characters, it is possibly due, because regarding the interactivity of the profile created, it was generated, only in a way that was not so open, due to the reservation that many prosumers wanted to have.

In this regard, in a discussion with its Director Edwin Restrepo, he revealed that being a project limited by a budget and within a specific public Television call, the possibility of expanding the Labels project with more products, and especially with the interactivity between the narrative and the user, was limited. So, as Renó well mentions, Labels could have this difficulty from transmedia: “If the citizen cannot participate in the conduct of the work or cognitive construction, we will never have a transmedia experience. Surely it can be an attempt, but surely it will be frustrating.” (Renó, 2019).

The case is that it is or is not Transmedia (For me it wanted to be within its limitations, but perhaps it lacked to further develop the imperative component of interactivity), which we could do with the constructive will that an analysis must have like this, It is to make, prospectively, a series of recommendations against the possibilities that seemed to emerge when doing the previous analysis of Labels against some elements of transmedia and it is what let's do.

#### **4 I #LABELSAREPERFECTED (RECOMMENDATIONS)**

- Expansion: The universe of Labels was able to expand much more with the possibilities of making other Instagram profiles of other actors. It would have been interesting, for example, to read Alejo's response to the publication of the chats between him and Verónica. Labels was fulfilling an essential first to achieve this and it was a good plot, a good story. “If I love something, I want it to last longer than those two hours in the cinema or that one-hour weekly television experience” (Jenkins, 2008).

In turn, the expansion could be made from web episodes within the portal about different elements of the story. For example, it could be the story of Veronica's dance partners, or how Alex learned to be a DJ, or the story of how the woman in the photo with Alex in the chat got to the disco and met Alex. Now, these web episodes could be done both in fiction, such as animation. Another possibility in the written world could be to create a blog or a diary of one of the characters, with past information, as with information about what happened from the character's personal point of view. Or how about a daily podcast?

- User participation: One could have encouraged audience participation, answering the messages they sent (Omitting the messages that spoke about the series). At this point, I will include a few words from Scolari, which could be a bit harsh but I think they fit in well at this point: “It is believed that giving a “like” to a content is enough, when transmedia narratives go much further. We are no longer talking about consumers, but prosumers who generate content and participate more broadly. If not, it would only be an expanded broadcasting” (Scolari, 2018). On the other hand, it is also clear that many of the interactions did occur, but within the inbox, which is also very valid in a project of this type.
- Co-creation (Participatory Culture): When initially thinking of itself as Transmedia, Labels, could include images of the characters reading the messages that were sent to them within the week in the episode broadcast on Television. Be careful, I am not talking about a literal reading of the posts, but rather of recording reactions to what might result in the messages ... That is what it is when you think about Transmedia, that in a certain way we can predict something. “A transmedia project has possible developments, but not necessarily expected. It is necessary to consider the existing co-authorship in the navigation processes, but also the creation of new products from the original, organic. A transmedia user (other than a viewer of a television program produced under traditional narratives) surely has other roles besides watching and interpreting the messages.” (Renó, 2019).

A (More ambitious) Co-creation might be that people could suggest how the story goes on. For example, if Verónica and Alejo are together or not, if they finish or not. Of course, this possibility suggests a very (very, very) robust production, but hey, dreaming doesn't cost anything, does it?

- Subjectivity: In this regard, Labels could have more crossed the stories of the characters both between each chapter, and on their social networks. In other words, it was necessary to have more social networks in order to expand the network. “The mistake is to keep thinking about retaining the public when what you have to think about is how to engage the public” (Pratten, 2012).

However, it should also be noted that not all the distinctive elements of transmedia must be in such a project. For example, I can have a good transmedia project without it leading to co-production of content by prosumers. But I think that what should be in a Transmedia project is interactivity with the user and the expansion of the narrative. Finally, I think that the Labels project is an initiative that undoubtedly opens the doors for new transmedia projects to begin to emerge, not only on regional public television, but in other production spaces in Colombia. It is definitely a project with a pioneer / precursor label in the Colombian transmedia narrative.

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